

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **AT**NEW YORK TIMES
2 December 1985

Spy Scandal: Loose Ends

*The Answers Suggest
Still Other Questions*

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Special to The New York Times

JERUSALEM, Dec. 1 — Israel's explanations thus far of how one of its senior officials became involved with the spy suspect Jonathan Jay Pollard leave many important questions unanswered.

News Analysis Most of these questions revolve around the degree of ministerial responsibility for Israel's purported espionage operation in Washington.

To put it simply: Was this reported spying affair an act of the Israeli Government, or was it the work of a "loose cannon" in Israel's intelligence apparatus?

The answer to this question relates to the even larger issue of American-Israeli relations: Was the Israeli Government, as a Government, involved in a potentially hostile act against the United States, its closest ally?

Or, was a senior Israeli official acting on his own initiative running an espionage mission in the United States unbeknownst to the Israeli Cabinet?

In addition, the espionage affair raises the issue of the precise character of the American-Israeli relationship. Is it a relationship purely between two sovereign nations or is it a relationship between members of the same family?

The issue became starkly apparent when Israel suddenly withdrew two of its United States-based diplomats who were reportedly involved in the affair and resisted for almost a week American requests that they be made available for questioning by F.B.I. investigators. In other words, does Israel owe the United States some kind of special cooperation because of the intimate relationship between the two nations?

Thus far, Israel has made only two public statements on the affair, neither of which really answered key questions. On Nov. 24 the Foreign Ministry issued a declaration indicating that the Pollard scandal took Israel's political leadership completely by surprise. And today, Prime Minister Shimon Peres implicitly admitted that a unit of the Israeli Government was involved in espionage in the United States, but said the investigation was continuing to find out exactly who was responsible.

Through nonpublic channels, the Israeli Government has relayed to the United States the preliminary results of an internal inquiry conducted by Mr. Peres, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Large portions of the results it have been disclosed to news organizations.

The Israeli explanations, given both in public and in private, contain many loose ends that lead toward the offices of both the Labor and Likud officials of Israel's coalition Cabinet.

The Initial Approach

These loose ends, which raise questions about the Pollard affair and its implications, appear at every stage:

Stage One: According to the Israeli Government, Mr. Pollard first came in contact with a senior Israeli official in the spring of 1984, when he approached an unnamed Israeli in Washington and said he wanted to cooperate on counterterrorism.

This unnamed Israeli put him in contact with a senior counterterrorism official in Israel, who has been identified as Rafi Eitan, adviser on terrorism to Mr. Shamir, who was then Prime Minister. Mr. Eitan was also a top official of the Liaison Bureau for Scientific Affairs — the office for the collection of scientific data that is known by the Hebrew acronym Lekem — in the Defense Ministry, which was then headed by Moshe Arens.

Who was this unnamed Israeli who passed Mr. Pollard along? Was he a diplomat? Was he a member of the Mossad, the Israeli equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency? Was he an Israeli journalist friendly to Mr. Eitan? The answer could be very important in determining the scope of the affair.

A Check of Credentials

Stage Two: The senior Israeli counterterrorism official who has been identified as Mr. Eitan checked out Mr. Pollard's credentials and decided to encourage him in his offer to get for Israel secret American intelligence on Arab armies and Soviet weapons in Arab hands, according to the Israeli explanations.

Could a senior counterterrorism official in the Israeli Government have enlisted Mr. Pollard without getting formal permission from his political superiors — in this case Mr. Shamir and Mr. Arens?

Here, officials familiar with the workings of the Israeli Government sharply disagree. A former chief of military intelligence, Yehoshua Seguy, told the Maariv newspaper last week that he had never heard of an Israeli intelligence officer "running" an agent on his own without getting clearance.

Another former Government official who knows Mr. Eitan described him as a seasoned Mossad veteran who never would have engaged in an operation like the Pollard affair — which broke the Israeli intelligence rules against spying in America and against using foreign Jews — without covering himself with written prior approvals.

'An American Oddball'

Other analysts disagree. Shabtai Teveth, the biographer of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, and a man with an intimate knowledge of the workings of the Israeli Government, said that it was possible that a senior counterterrorism official could have acted on his own initiative. He said such an official might have acted without asking his political superiors, since he might have been afraid they would have either rejected the idea or not wanted to know about it.

"It is inconceivable that someone like Rabin or Peres would ever give such an order to employ Pollard," Mr. Teveth said. "This was a lower-echelon official, seeing an opportunity to take advantage of an American oddball, going off on his own."

Mr. Eitan was a former chief of operations in the Mossad. His job in the secretive office of adviser to the Prime Minister on terrorism gave him a good deal of power and latitude, and this was made even larger by the fact that he was working simultaneously at Lekem in the Defense Ministry.

Mr. Eitan is also a member of the central committee of the Herut Party, the core of the Likud bloc, and his main political patron is Ariel Sharon — all of which adds to the political sensitivities involved in dealing with this matter.

Sending Secret Documents

Stage Three: According to Israeli explanations, Mr. Pollard is reported to have started sending secret American documents through the Israeli science attachés in Washington and New York back to his contact in Israel. The two science attachés were both Lekem employees.

Could all of this passing of information been done if the Mossad representative in the United States — who must have been aware of the understanding that Israel and the United States would not spy on one another — did not know about it, let alone the Ministry of Defense?

Stage Four: In September 1984 Shimon Peres took over as Prime Minister and relieved Mr. Eitan of his post as adviser on terrorism. Mr. Eitan, or whoever the senior counterterrorism official was, apparently continued his operations with Mr. Pollard from his other office at Lekem.

In the transition, would not the senior counterterrorism official have briefed the new Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, on what was happening?

The Nature of the Transition

Officials here say the answer to that question depends on whether he ever told his previous boss, Mr. Shamir. If the counterterrorism official had not told Mr. Shamir what he was doing, it is even more unlikely that he would have told Mr. Peres, who was about to dismiss him from the office of the adviser to the Prime Minister on terrorism.

Or, maybe the official described the operation in such general and benign

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terms that it did not raise suspicions. Also, did Mr. Shamir tell Mr. Peres anything about the affair during their brief transition?

Stage Five: According to the Israeli examination, Mr. Pollard began working for Israel out of his pro-Zionist sentiments, but soon started asking for money for personal reasons. The senior counterterrorism official reportedly paid him between \$25,000 and \$30,000 in several small installments.

Where did he get the money? Here again, opinions are divided. Some analysts say it is inconceivable that a senior official on his own could have authorized such funds, without getting clearance from his political superiors.

Other officials, however, contend that the senior counterterrorism operative "running" Mr. Pollard had substantial discretionary funds in both the office of the adviser on terrorism and at Lekem. This money could be used to pay Mr. Pollard without raising questions, particularly since Mr. Pollard was paid in installments.

Was the Source Sought?

Stage Six: The senior counterterrorism official was funneling the intelligence he picked up from Mr. Pollard to the appropriate authorities in the Defense Ministry and intelligence apparatus.

Did no one ask who was the source of this information, which Israeli officials have described as "very valuable"? Was not Mr. Shamir, who spent more than a decade in the Mossad, curious about how a senior counterterrorism official was obtaining such information? Didn't Mr. Peres, Mr. Rabin and the chiefs of the Mossad and military intelligence inquire about the source of this valuable data on Soviet weapons?

Up to now, the explanation of officials has been that because the senior counterterrorism official had a long background in Mossad operations, and was also a boss at Lekem, he was a frequent contributor to Israeli intelligence. Moreover, the Israeli sources said senior officials here are used to receiving intelligence in which the original source is unknown. Some even prefer it that way for purposes of deniability.

Stage Seven: Mr. Pollard began to relay American intelligence reports about sensitive military matters in Israel, according to Israeli sources. This supposedly led Mr. Pollard's Israeli contact to suspect a leak in the Israeli military establishment and to try to track it down on his own, without telling anyone else in the Government.

This appears to many analysts here to be both unbelievable and self-serving. How did this official expect to track down the leak by himself in such a vast system as the Israeli military and intelligence establishment?